

## LIBRARY TRAINING :—WHAT WE NEED IN NEW ZEALAND.

(By J. O. Wilson, A.L.A., *General Assembly Library*).

Great progress has been made in the standard of library training in New Zealand during the last ten years. Then there was but one librarian who could lay claim to any certificate of proficiency in librarianship. There were of course others who had either studied abroad or travelled overseas for experience but for one reason or another had not received any special recognition of their training. It is largely due to the encouragement of these people that the advance has been made. To-day the latest English Library Association year book lists eleven Fellows and eight Associates dwelling in the Dominion, while there are others with different but no less valuable qualifications.

How has this advance been made? Certain of those qualified were born and trained overseas, others have gone overseas from this country, a number through the generosity of the Carnegie Corporation, to receive training and experience, but the majority have remained here and received their specialized training through hard work in their leisure hours. It is these students that we must consider in deciding our needs in New Zealand. Recently there have been an increasing number of proposals for the drawing up of a syllabus more suited to New Zealand conditions, but in doing this we should be acting very prematurely. What we need first of all is trained librarians to act as tutors.

It should then be possible for us to make some agreement with the English Library Association to take over the correspondence courses which at present we must obtain from them. Many of the difficulties under which our students now labour are due largely to the distance from the tutor, and thus the delays due to time in the post should be materially reduced, while at the same time there should be some saving in cost of postage.

It would be inadvisable to take over all the courses immediately and at once, but only as tutors could be found to take over each course. It might be some considerable time before courses in the more advanced subjects could be given, but I have no doubt that eventually it should be done. As at present, supplementary classes could still be used.

At first the tutors could continue under the administration of the English Library association, so that we could have the benefit of their experience, though the New Zealand Library

Association could act as agent and superintend the distribution of the courses. Eventually, however, the New Zealand Library Association should take over the whole administration of the courses.

With the experience gained in the administration of these courses, our next move could then be considered. If it is thought best to have a special syllabus and certificates, we should have some basis on which to work. The tutors would have gained a good deal of specialized knowledge about New Zealand conditions, together with our needs and many other items. With this end in view, we could introduce into the courses, readings on New Zealand library law, etc.; a scheme which would entail slight extra work on the part of the student, but which would be of great advantage to him. Similarly references should be given to articles with a New Zealand bias in our own publications.

Special arrangements could perhaps be made to give courses to those who desired to continue with the English examinations, but this would depend on the number desirous of so doing. Whatever happens, we must not allow ourselves to be saddled with some scheme which will fulfil but portion of our needs; we must have a certificate which will be of recognized standing in the profession and outside, both here and abroad.

Then finally, we would be on the road to attaining our ultimate ideal, a school of librarianship attached, perhaps, to one of the university colleges. Once again, the groundwork that has been suggested should prove invaluable in constructing a scheme, which, there is no doubt, will greatly benefit librarianship in this country. By progressing slowly we should avoid many of the mistakes inevitable in the launching of a comprehensive scheme.

In conclusion I should like to point out that although I have dealt with a scheme of library training and education, I do not wish to leave the impression that this is all that we as librarians need. No amount of specialized library training can make up for the lack of general background and any scheme should impress on students the need for obtaining this.

Here briefly I have laid down my opinion of our needs in this direction. In many ways they are not ambitious, but, at the moment when many of us are certain to get a course of military training, they may appear so.